

ing"—required infinitely more faith and resignation than Abraham had previously exercised. Compared with that faith which this extraordinary trial rendered necessary, all former illustrations were but experiments—mere rays of that clear noon-day sunshine of implicit and holy confidence which he now exhibited.

But, by what process did he become possessed of this exalted and radiant faith? By continually exercising himself in the will of God. By expanding his trust in Almighty Wisdom, in proportion to the development of that providence by which he was so willingly led. Abraham had gradually and imperceptibly to himself, arrived at this glorious triumph of faith over human feelings and frailties. What then does this teach? That the spiritual life is *progressive* in its nature—that the true strength of faith is acquired only by the experience of trials—that the christian ought to become *more courageous* after each successive trial.

There is, however, one point in particular to which I would call your attention by way of profitably considering this important part of the history and character of Abraham; namely, that while Abraham could so *readily and unfeignedly* resign himself to the command of God, in a matter so *heart-rending in its nature*; many christians, eminent for piety, often show *great reluctance* when required to yield some *similar object* of affection to the Divine Will.

Christian faith is often greatly deficient when compared with that which characterized the patriarchal age; and, notwithstanding all the noble illustrations and examples which are set before us in Holy Scripture, and all those brilliant instances of devotion and sacrifice with which we are furnished in the lives of the ancient martyrs, there is too little in the present day to indicate the existence of a truly exalted standard of christian faith. Those who should be, "living epistles" of enduring piety, have been found to waste their zeal and learning in raising futile objections against the fundamental principles of our holy religion. Instead of studying the history of the Old Testament worthies, for the